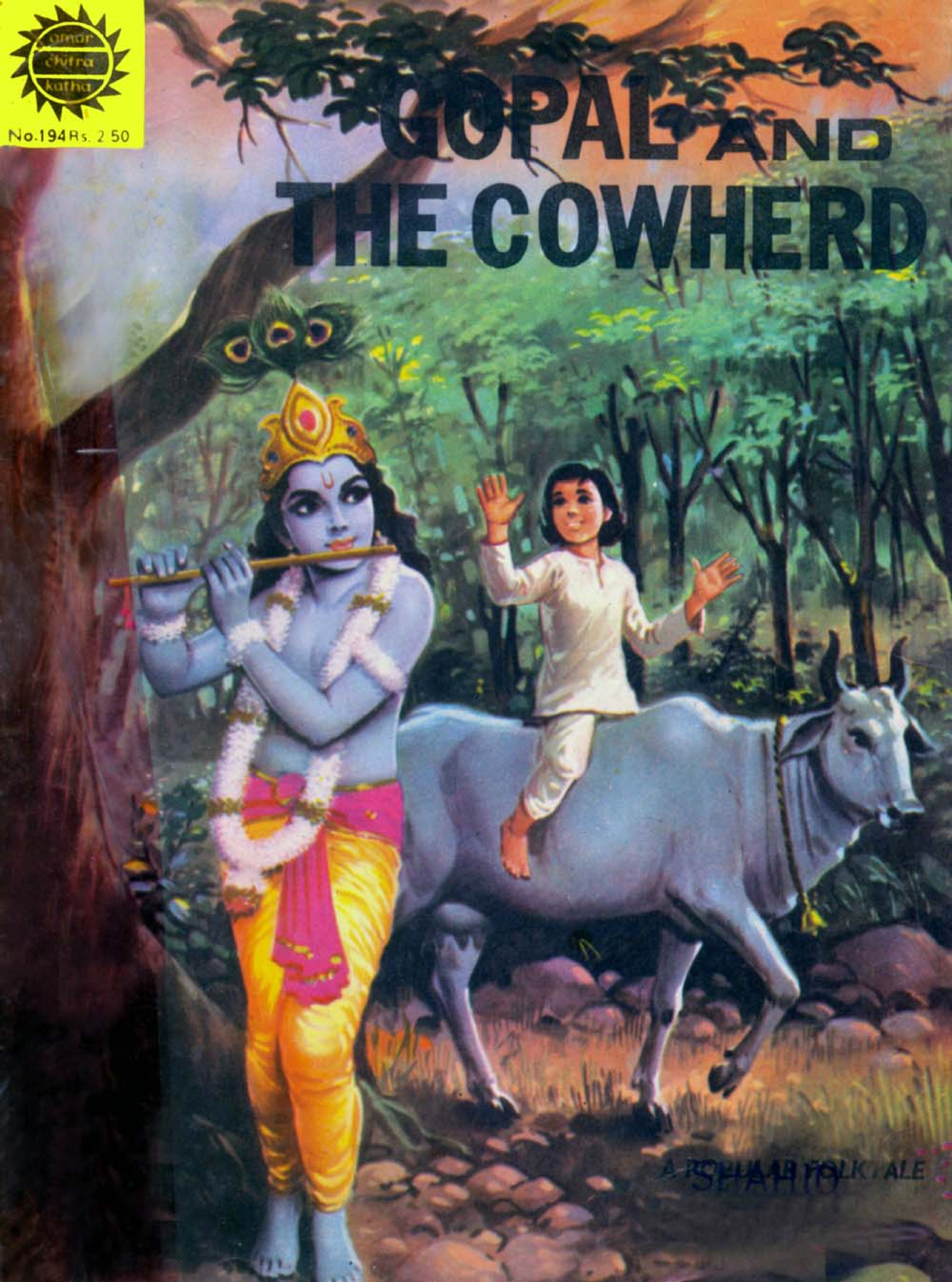

amar chitra katha
No.194 Rs. 2.50
GOPAL AND THE COWHERD
SHAHID

This is a folktale which has delighted children all over India.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa used to narrate stories of this kind to his disciples to illustrate his teachings. This story explains the power of faith. The total faith of Gopal's mother is in sharp contrast with the teacher's disbelief.

This Amar Chitra Katha is based on the version in *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* by Sister Nivedita.

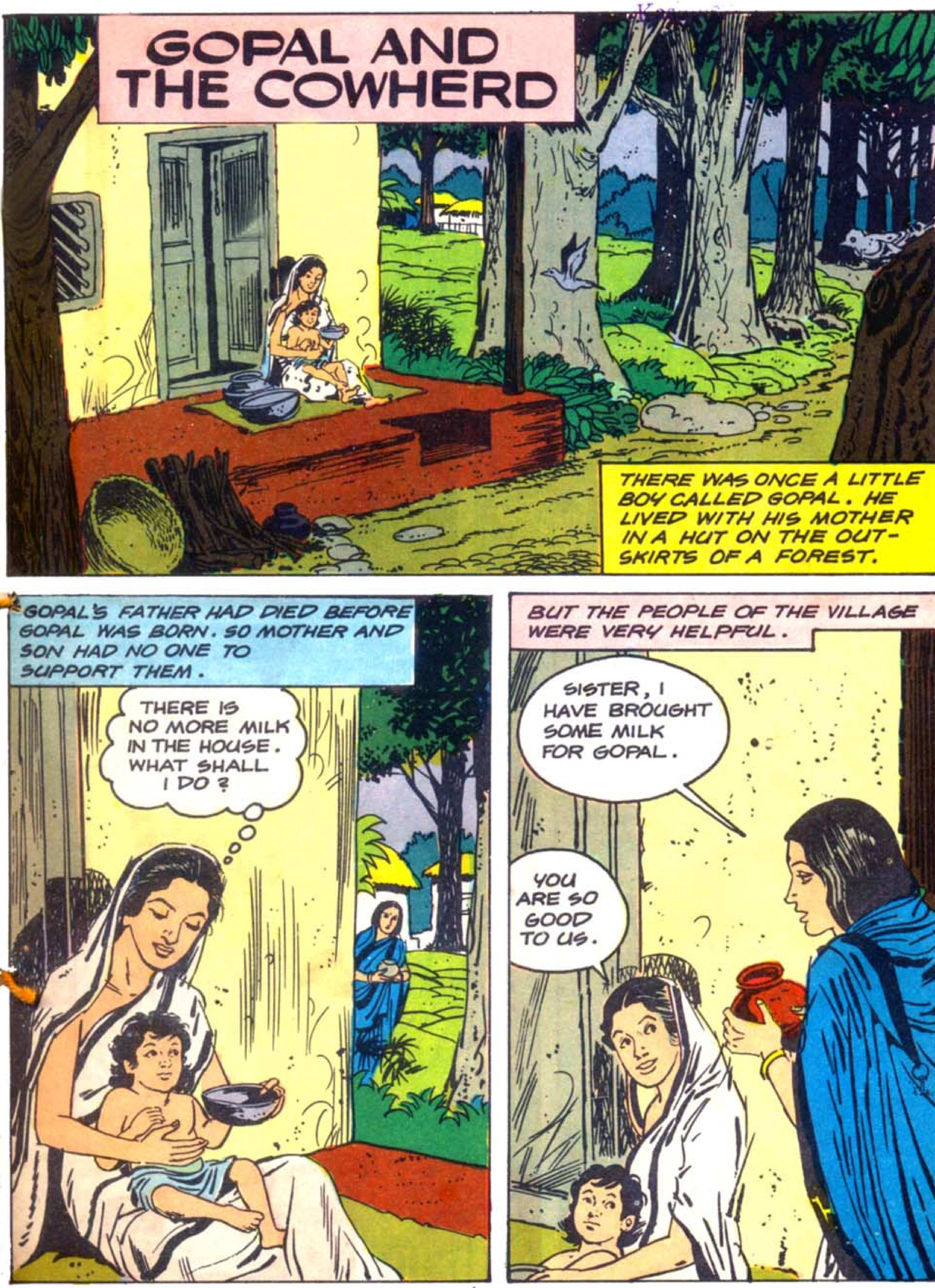
Gopal and the Cowherd is an example of the richness and appeal of the folktales of this country.

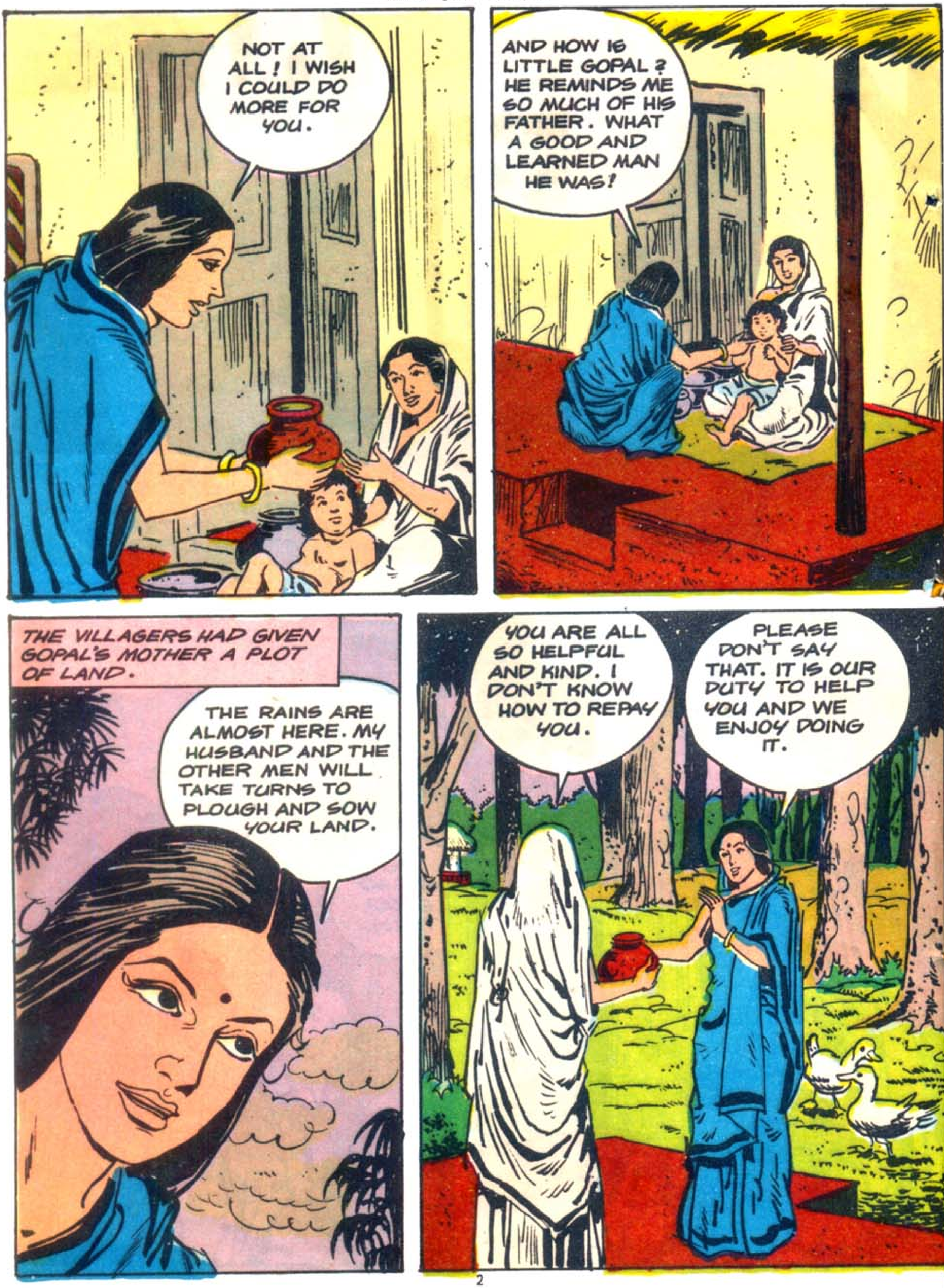
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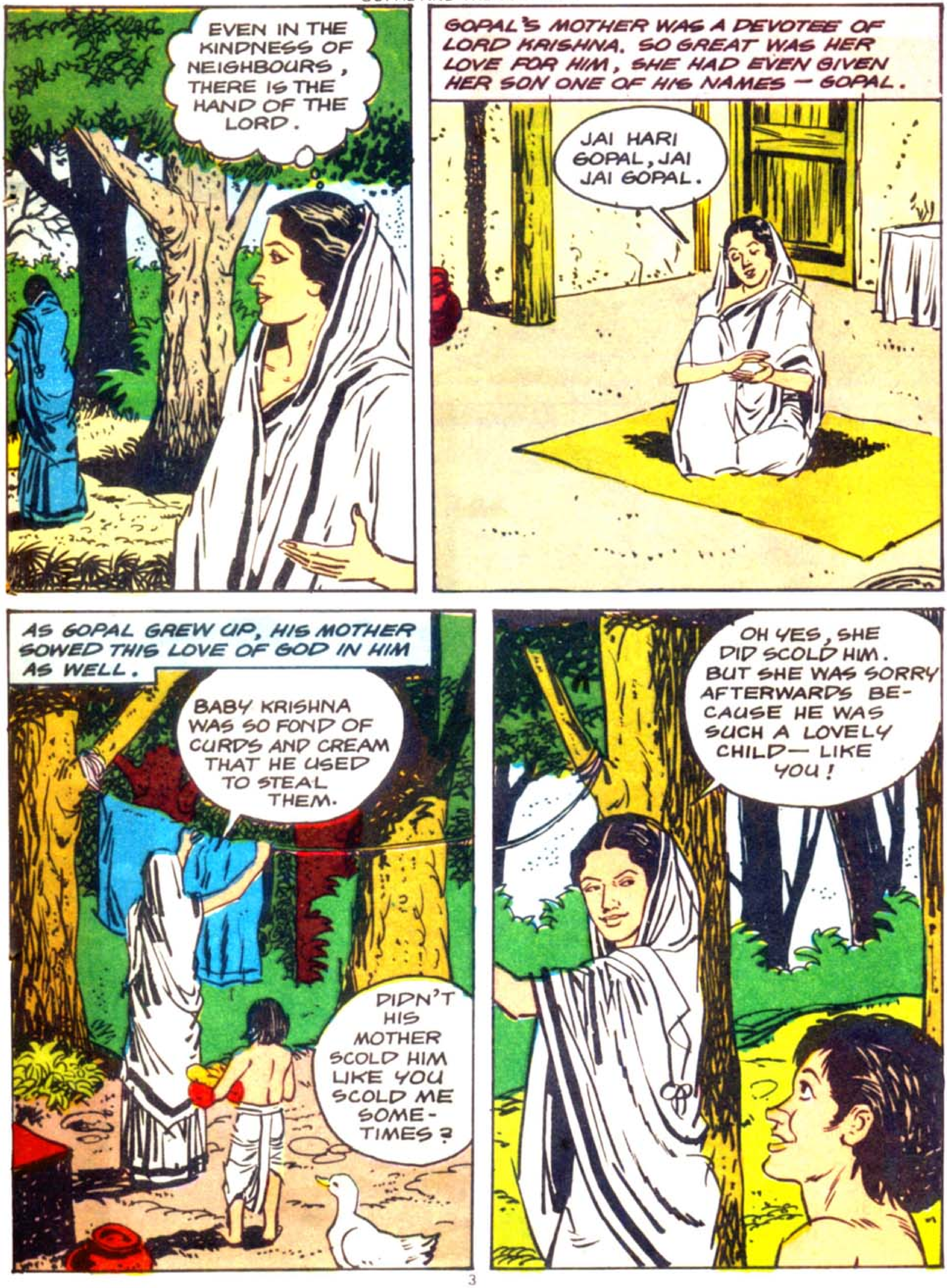
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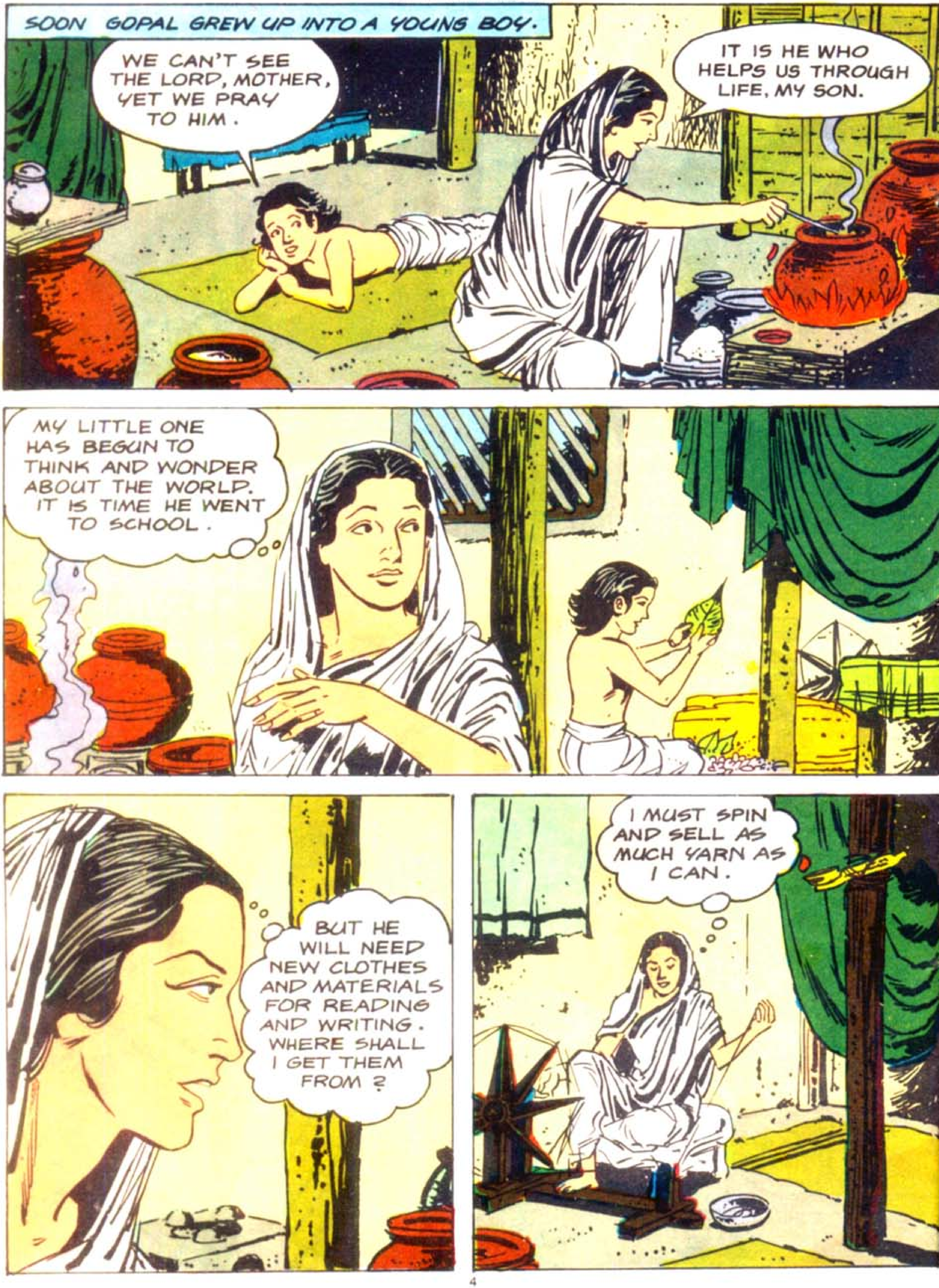
Published by H.G. Mirchandani, for India Book House Education Trust, Rusi Mansion, 29, Nathalal Parekh Marg, Bombay-400 039 and printed by him at IBH Printers, Marol Naka, Mathuradas Vissanji Road, Andheri (East), Bombay-400 059.

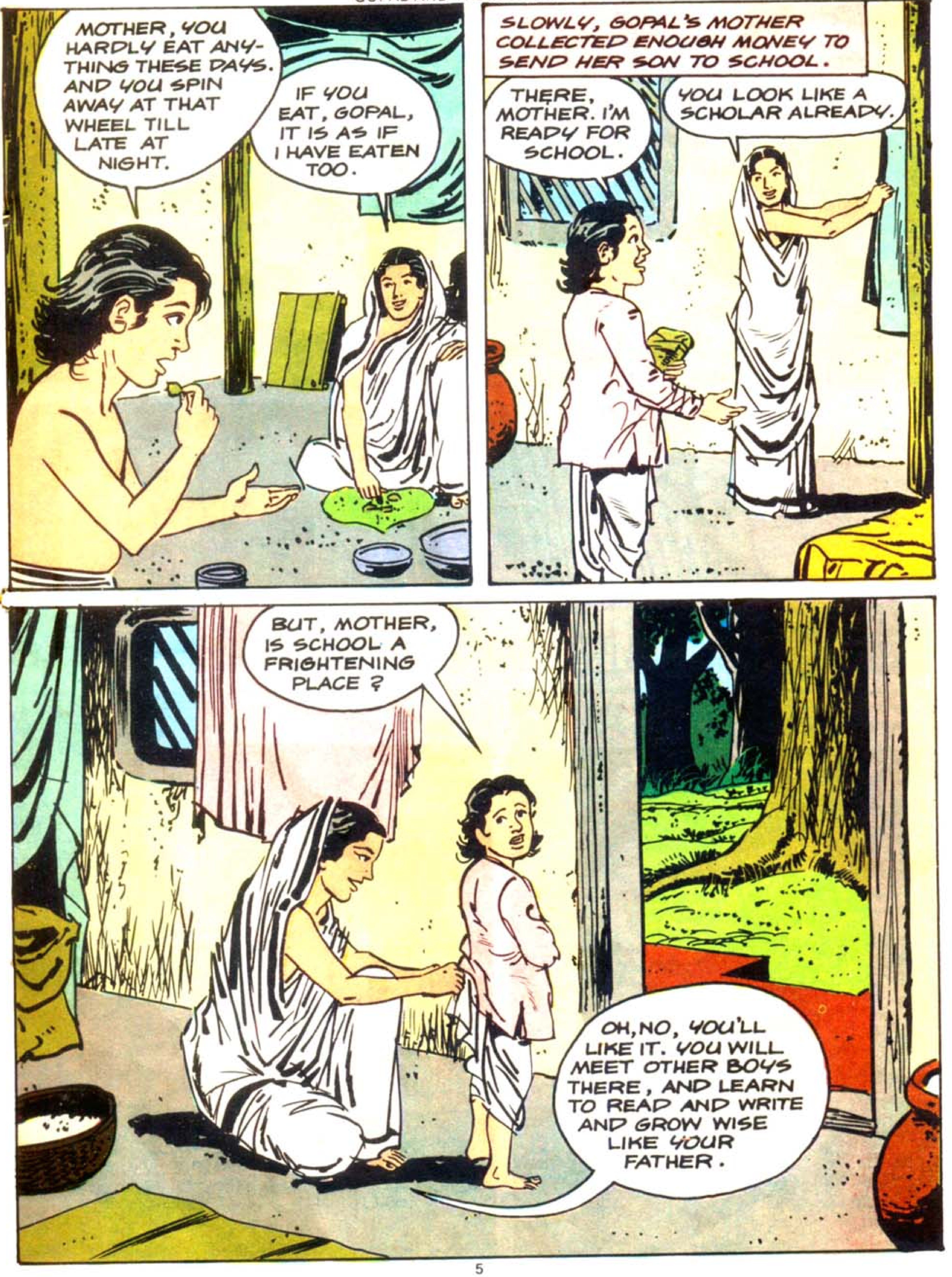
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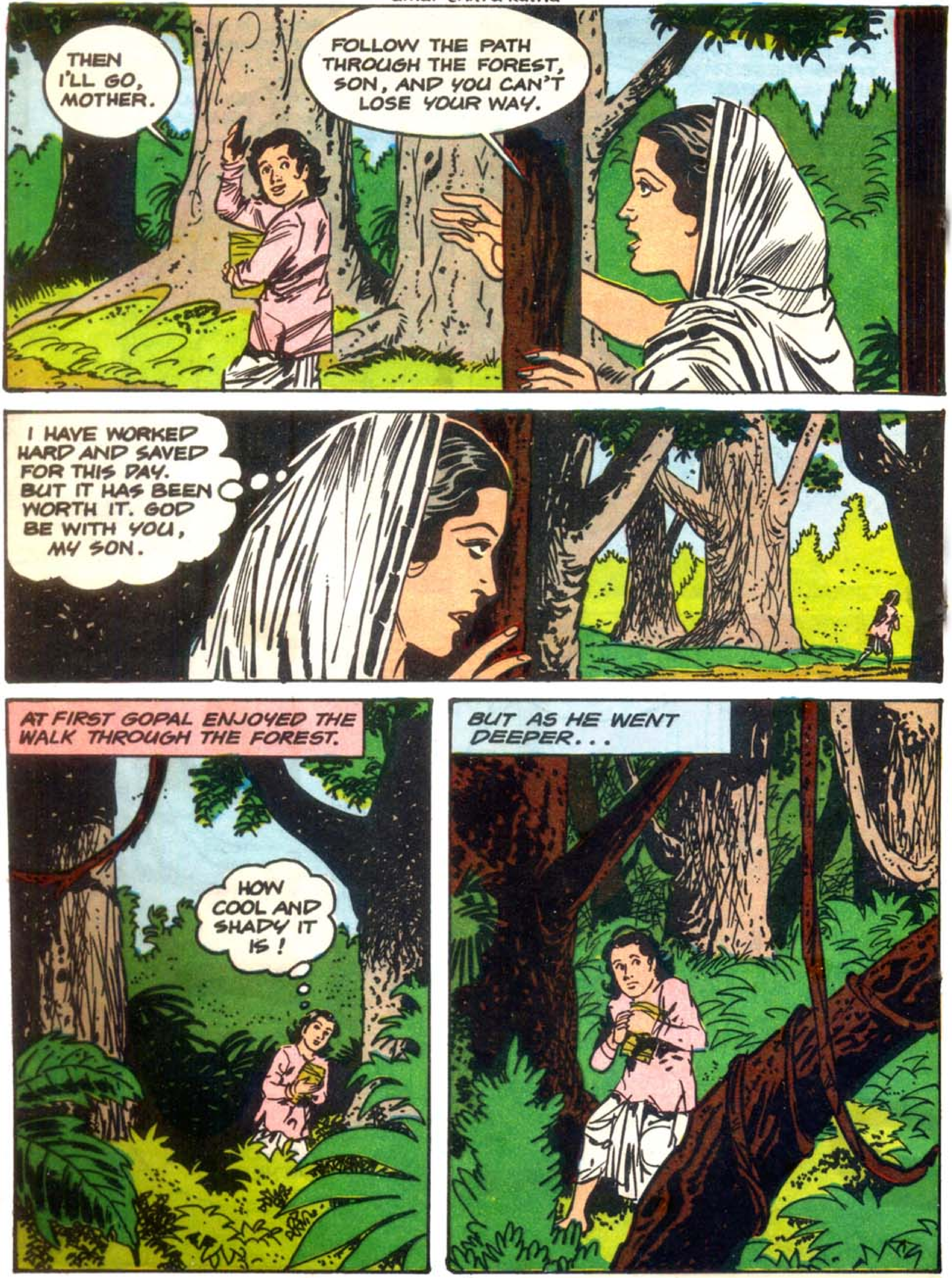

GOPAL AND THE COWHERD
THERE WAS ONCE A LITTLE BOY CALLED GOPAL. HE LIVED WITH HIS MOTHER IN A HUT ON THE OUT-SKIRTS OF A FOREST.
GOPAL'S FATHER HAD DIED BEFORE GOPAL WAS BORN. SO MOTHER AND SON HAD NO ONE TO SUPPORT THEM.
THERE IS NO MORE MILK IN THE HOUSE. WHAT SHALL I DO?
BUT THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE WERE VERY HELPFUL.
SISTER, I HAVE BROUGHT SOME MILK FOR GOPAL.
YOU ARE SO GOOD TO US.


NOT AT ALL ! I WISH I COULD DO MORE FOR YOU.
AND HOW IS LITTLE GOPAL ? HE REMINDS ME SO MUCH OF HIS FATHER. WHAT A GOOD AND LEARNED MAN HE WAS!
THE VILLAGERS HAD GIVEN GOPAL'S MOTHER A PLOT OF LAND.
THE RAINS ARE ALMOST HERE. MY HUSBAND AND THE OTHER MEN WILL TAKE TURNS TO PLOUGH AND SOW YOUR LAND.
YOU ARE ALL SO HELPFUL AND KIND. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO REPAY YOU.
PLEASE DON'T SAY THAT. IT IS OUR DUTY TO HELP YOU AND WE ENJOY DOING IT.


EVEN IN THE KINDNESS OF NEIGHBOURS, THERE IS THE HAND OF THE LORD.
GOPAL'S MOTHER WAS A DEVOTEE OF LORD KRISHNA. SO GREAT WAS HER LOVE FOR HIM, SHE HAD EVEN GIVEN HER SON ONE OF HIS NAMES — GOPAL.
JAI HARI GOPAL, JAI JAI GOPAL.
AS GOPAL GREW UP, HIS MOTHER SOWED THIS LOVE OF GOD IN HIM AS WELL.
BABY KRISHNA WAS SO FOND OF CURDS AND CREAM THAT HE USED TO STEAL THEM.
DIDN'T HIS MOTHER SCOLD HIM LIKE YOU SCOLD ME SOME-TIMES?
OH YES, SHE DID SCOLD HIM. BUT SHE WAS SORRY AFTERWARDS BE-CAUSE HE WAS SUCH A LOVELY CHILD— LIKE YOU!


SOON GOPAL GREW UP INTO A YOUNG BOY.
WE CAN'T SEE THE LORD, MOTHER, YET WE PRAY TO HIM.
IT IS HE WHO HELPS US THROUGH LIFE, MY SON.
MY LITTLE ONE HAS BEGUN TO THINK AND WONDER ABOUT THE WORLD. IT IS TIME HE WENT TO SCHOOL.
BUT HE WILL NEED NEW CLOTHES AND MATERIALS FOR READING AND WRITING. WHERE SHALL I GET THEM FROM ?
I MUST SPIN AND SELL AS MUCH YARN AS I CAN.

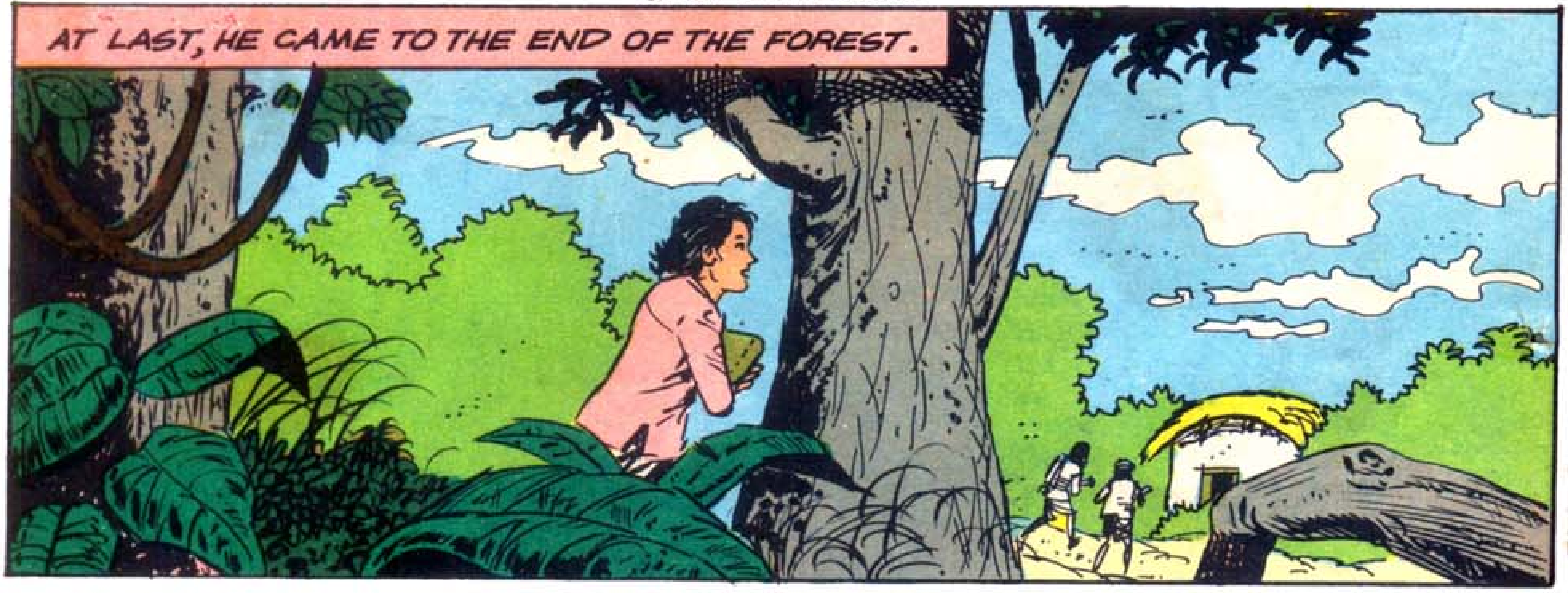

MOTHER, YOU HARDLY EAT ANY-THING THESE DAYS. AND YOU SPIN AWAY AT THAT WHEEL TILL LATE AT NIGHT.
IF YOU EAT, GOPAL, IT IS AS IF I HAVE EATEN TOO.
SLOWLY, GOPAL'S MOTHER COLLECTED ENOUGH MONEY TO SEND HER SON TO SCHOOL.
THERE, MOTHER. I'M READY FOR SCHOOL.
YOU LOOK LIKE A SCHOLAR ALREADY.
BUT, MOTHER, IS SCHOOL A FRIGHTENING PLACE ?
OH, NO, YOU'LL LIKE IT. YOU WILL MEET OTHER BOYS THERE, AND LEARN TO READ AND WRITE AND GROW WISE LIKE YOUR FATHER.

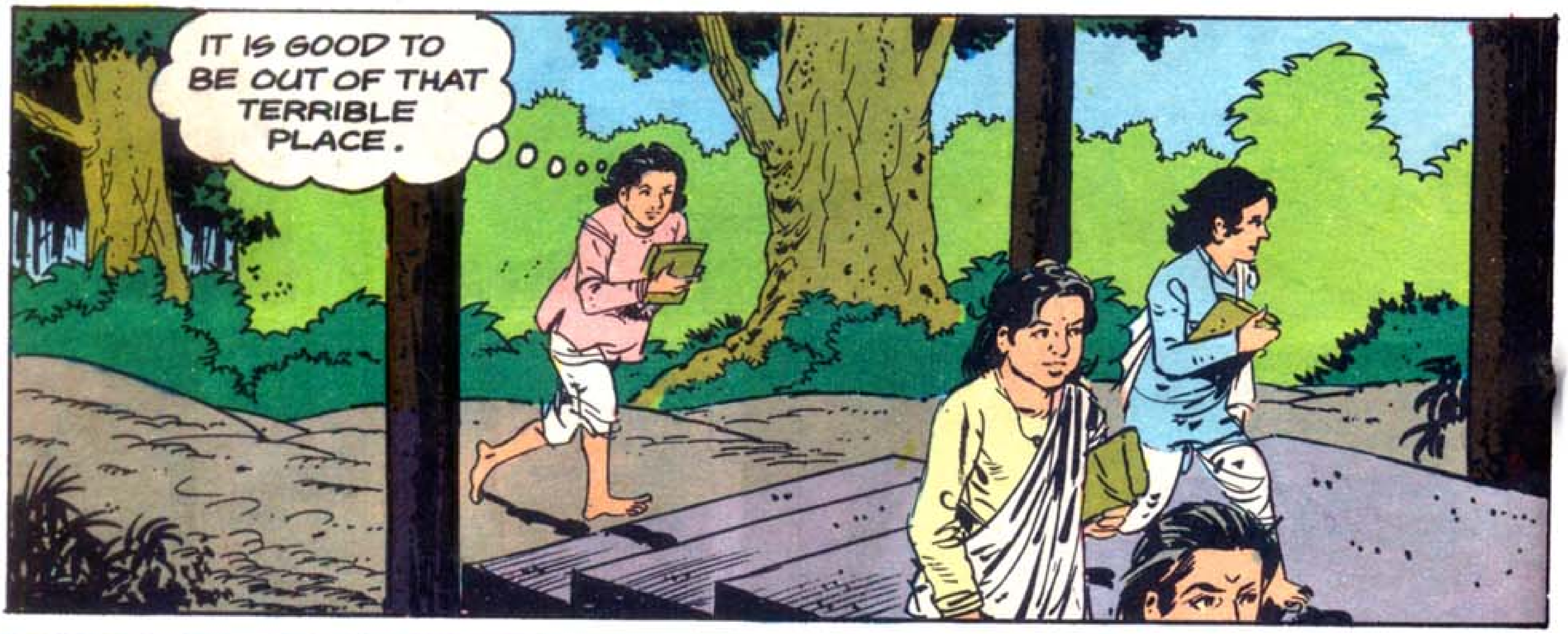

THEN I'LL GO, MOTHER.
FOLLOW THE PATH THROUGH THE FOREST, SON, AND YOU CAN'T LOSE YOUR WAY.
I HAVE WORKED HARD AND SAVED FOR THIS DAY. BUT IT HAS BEEN WORTH IT. GOD BE WITH YOU, MY SON.
AT FIRST GOPAL ENJOYED THE WALK THROUGH THE FOREST.
HOW COOL AND SHADY IT IS!
BUT AS HE WENT DEEPER...

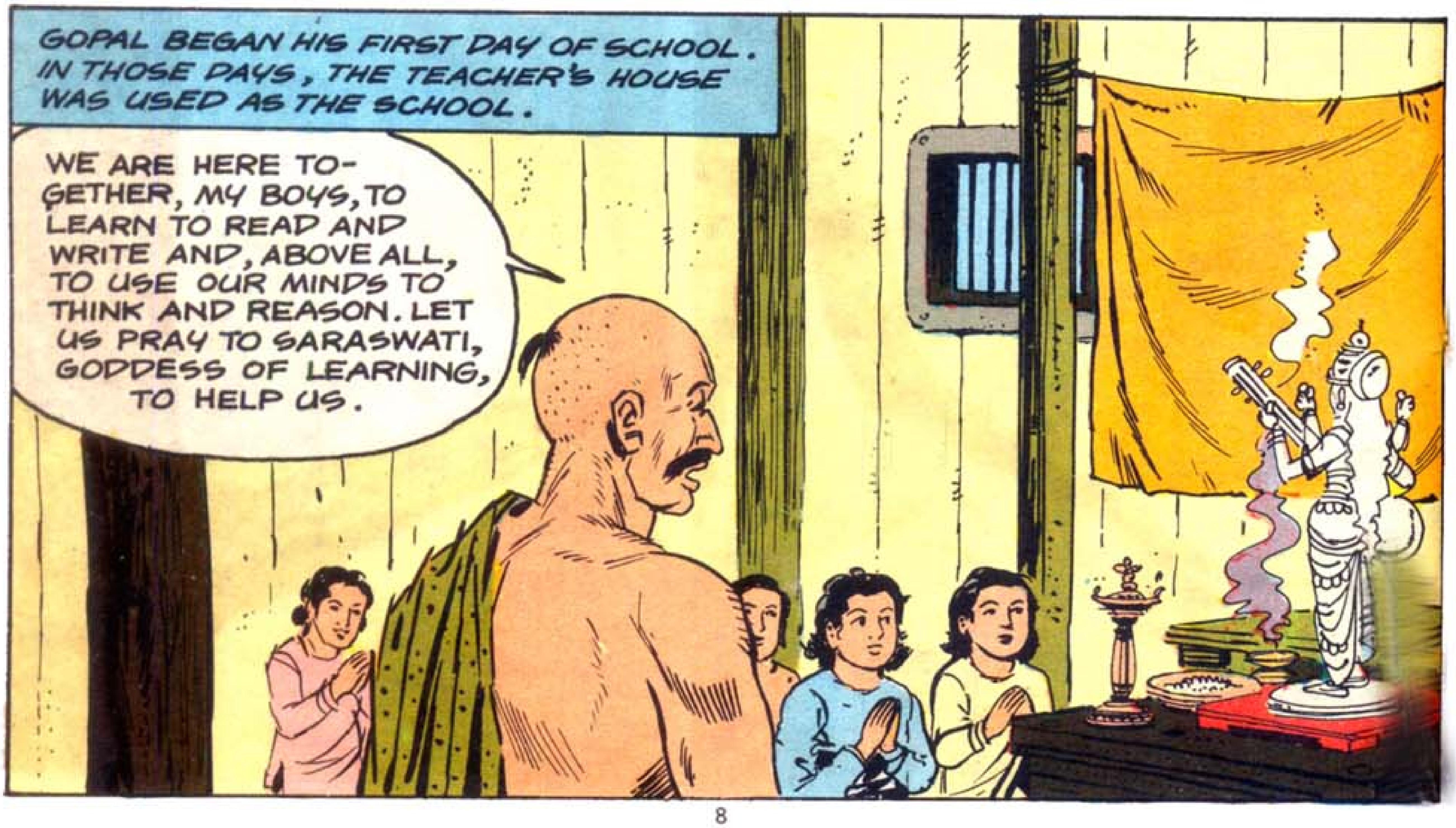

. . . THE TREES BEGAN TO CLOSE IN.
IT IS SO FRIGHTENING HERE. HAVE I LOST MY WAY ?

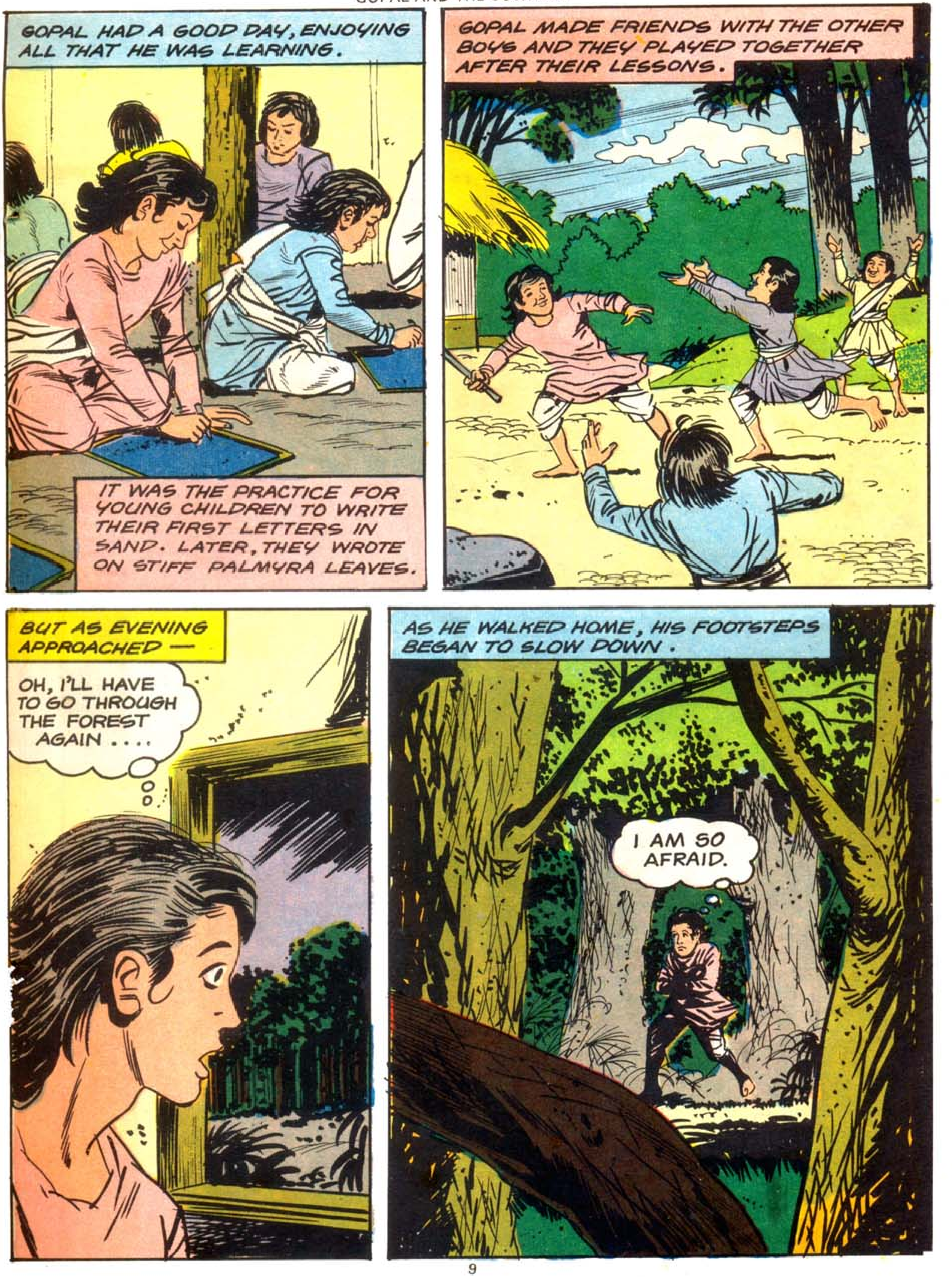

THE BRANCHES LOOK AS IF THEY ARE COMING TO CATCH ME.


GOPAL BEGAN TO WALK FASTER.


AT LAST, HE CAME TO THE END OF THE FOREST.


IT IS GOOD TO BE OUT OF THAT TERRIBLE PLACE.


GOPAL BEGAN HIS FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. IN THOSE DAYS, THE TEACHER'S HOUSE WAS USED AS THE SCHOOL.
WE ARE HERE TOGETHER, MY BOYS, TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE AND, ABOVE ALL, TO USE OUR MINDS TO THINK AND REASON. LET US PRAY TO SARASWATI, GODDESS OF LEARNING, TO HELP US.


GOPAL HAD A GOOD DAY, ENJOYING ALL THAT HE WAS LEARNING.
IT WAS THE PRACTICE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN TO WRITE THEIR FIRST LETTERS IN SAND. LATER, THEY WROTE ON STIFF PALMYRA LEAVES.
GOPAL MADE FRIENDS WITH THE OTHER BOYS AND THEY PLAYED TOGETHER AFTER THEIR LESSONS.
BUT AS EVENING APPROACHED —
OH, I'LL HAVE TO GO THROUGH THE FOREST AGAIN....
AS HE WALKED HOME, HIS FOOTSTEPS BEGAN TO SLOW DOWN.
I AM SO AFRAID.


IT HAD GROWN QUITE DARK. SUDDENLY—
OOOOO
MOTHER!
MEANWHILE, AT HOME —
IT IS TIME MY LITTLE ONE CAME HOME.
HERE HE COMES.
MY SON, YOU ARE TREMBLING LIKE A LEAF. AND SO WHITE IN THE FACE! WHAT IS IT ?
OH MOTHER, MOTHER, MOTHER—


WHAT IS IT, GOPAL ? DID THE MASTER BEAT YOU ? WERE THE BOYS UNFRIENDLY ? DON'T CRY, MY SON .
WON'T YOU TELL YOUR MOTHER ?
I HATE IT. . . . I HATE THE FOREST.
THE FOREST ?
IT IS SO DARK IN THERE AND HORRIBLE SOUNDS COME FROM THE BUSHES .
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL TOMORROW, MOTHER.
GOPAL, HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT ?


AND GOPAL STOOD THERE, LOOKING ASHAMED AND MISERABLE.
THAT NIGHT, GOPAL'S MOTHER WAS VERY WORRIED.
WHAT SHALL I DO ? I CANNOT GO WITH HIM EVERY DAY. THERE IS SO MUCH WORK TO DO.
THE NEXT MORNING—
OTHER CHILDREN HAVE BROTHERS, UNCLES OR SERVANTS TO TAKE THEM TO SCHOOL. WHO DO WE HAVE, MY POOR GOPAL ?
WHO DO WE HAVE ? YES, OF COURSE ! WE HAVE LORD KRISHNA ! WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF HIM BEFORE ?
DEAR LORD, YOU ARE THE FATHER OF THE POOR. YOU PROTECT ALL. I KNOW YOU WILL PROTECT MY GOPAL.


AT THE THOUGHT OF KRISHNA, HER WORRY HAD VANISHED.
WAKE UP, LITTLE ONE. IT IS ALREADY LATE FOR SCHOOL.
SCHOOL? I DON'T WANT TO GO, MOTHER.
MOTHER, WILL YOU COME WITH ME?
BUT WILL YOU GO IF SOMEONE TAKES YOU?
I WON'T BE ABLE TO, MY SON, BUT YOUR BROTHER WILL.
MY... MY BROTHER?
YES. HIS NAME IS ALSO GOPAL. HE IS A COWHERD. HE GRAZES HIS COWS IN THE FOREST.
REALLY, MOTHER? IS THAT TRUE?


YES. IF YOU ARE AFRAID, YOU HAVE ONLY TO CALL HIM. HE WILL COME AT ONCE.
OH, MOTHER, I HAVE NEVER SEEN MY BROTHER. I NEVER KNEW I HAD ONE!


I WILL GO TO SCHOOL THEN, MOTHER.

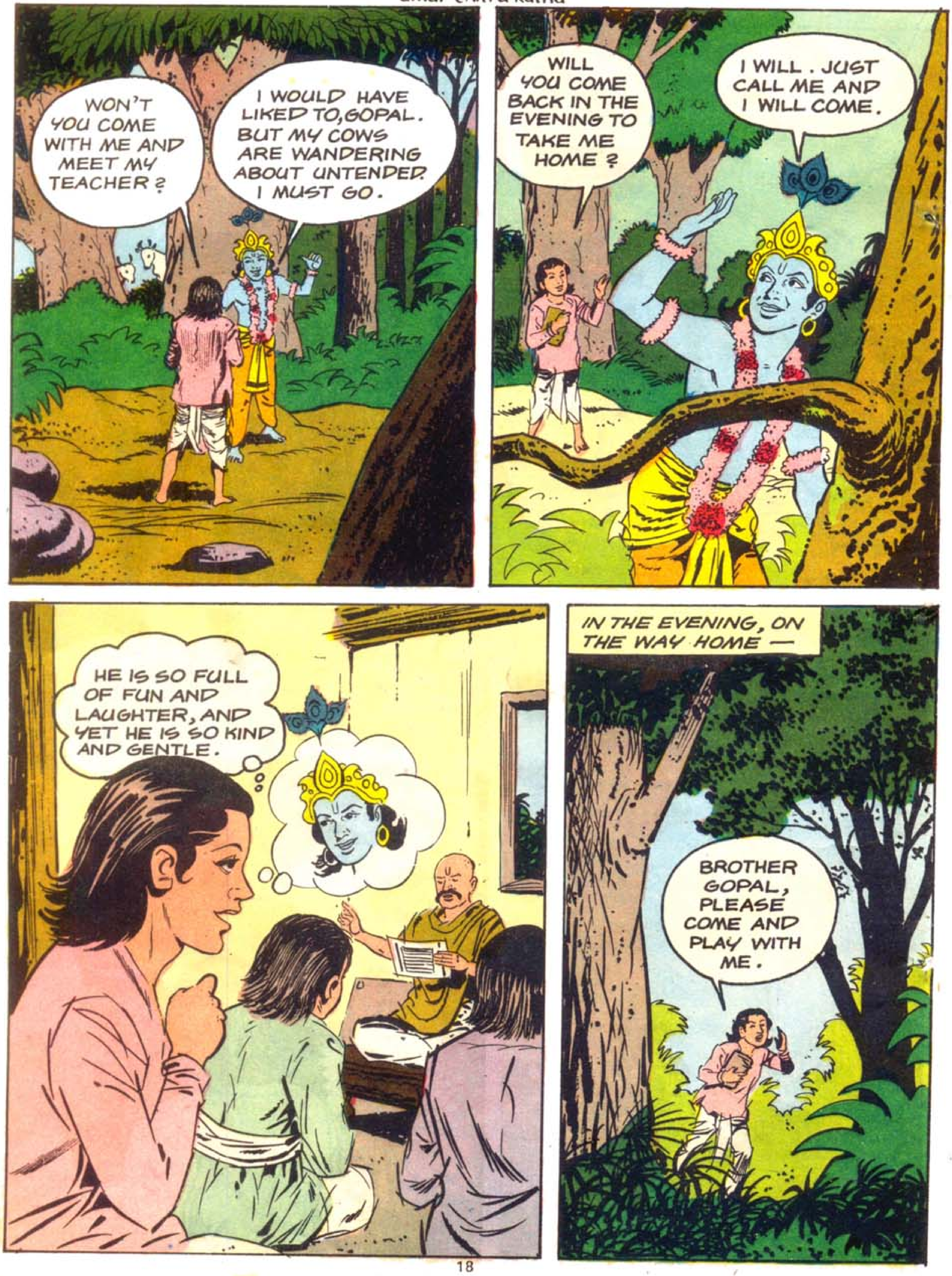

SOON, GOPAL WAS READY.
GOODBYE, MOTHER. I AM LONGING TO SEE BROTHER GOPAL.
HE WILL COME, MY SON.


MY LORD, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH. TAKE CARE OF MY SON FOR ME.


I HAVE ONLY TO CALL HIM AND HE WILL COME.
AS GOPAL WENT DEEPER INTO THE FOREST, HIS FEARS BEGAN TO RETURN.
WILL HE REALLY COME WHEN I CALL?
BROTHER GOPAL, BROTHER....
I HEAR THE JINGLE OF COW-BELLS.

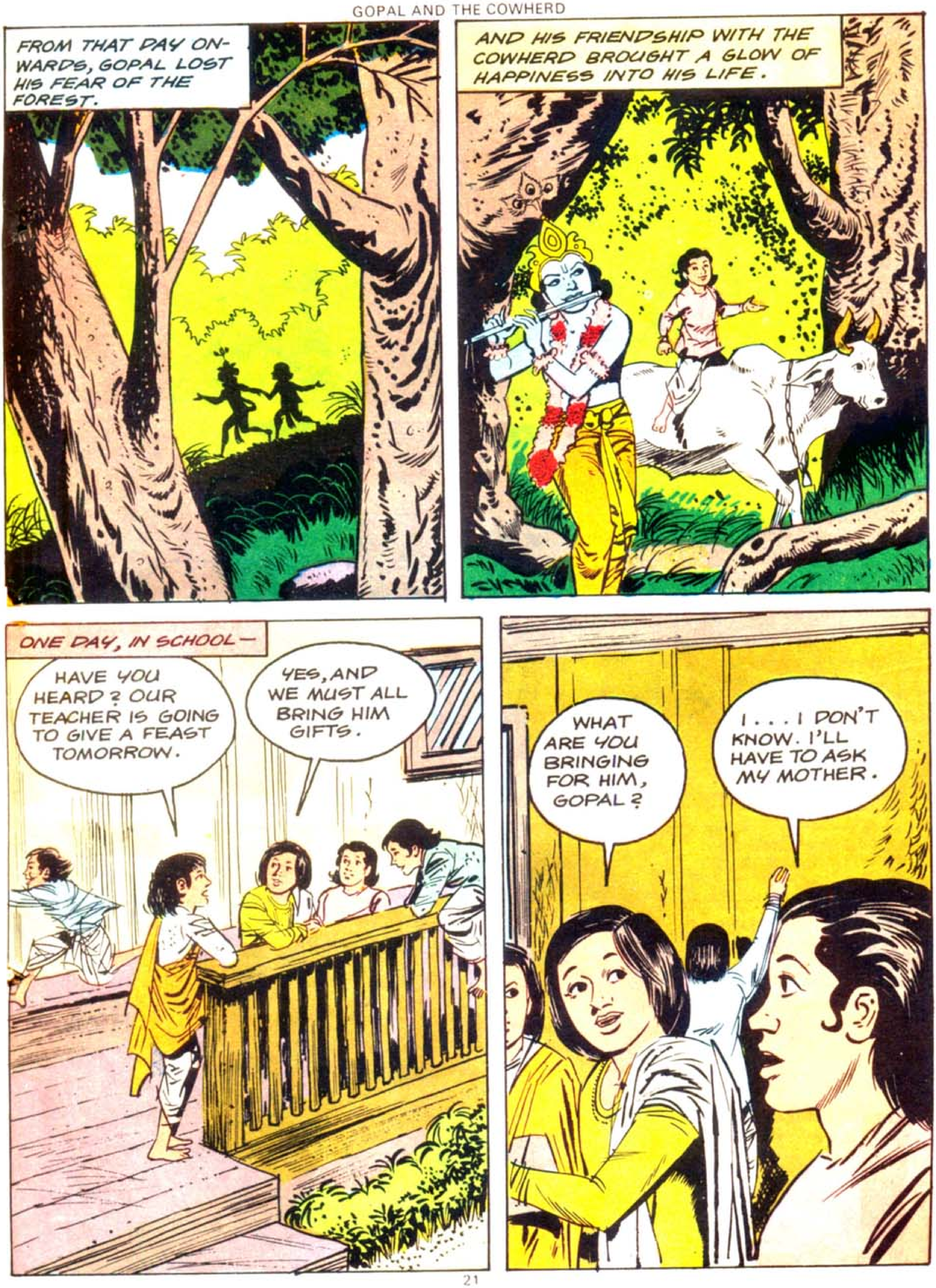

AGAIN GOPAL CALLED OUT.
BROTHER GOPAL, WHERE ARE YOU?
THERE WAS A RUSTLE IN THE BUSHES AND—
I AM COMING, LITTLE BROTHER.
COME QUICKLY, BROTHER. I AM AFRAID.
THE NEXT MOMENT —
OH!
HERE I AM, GOPAL.

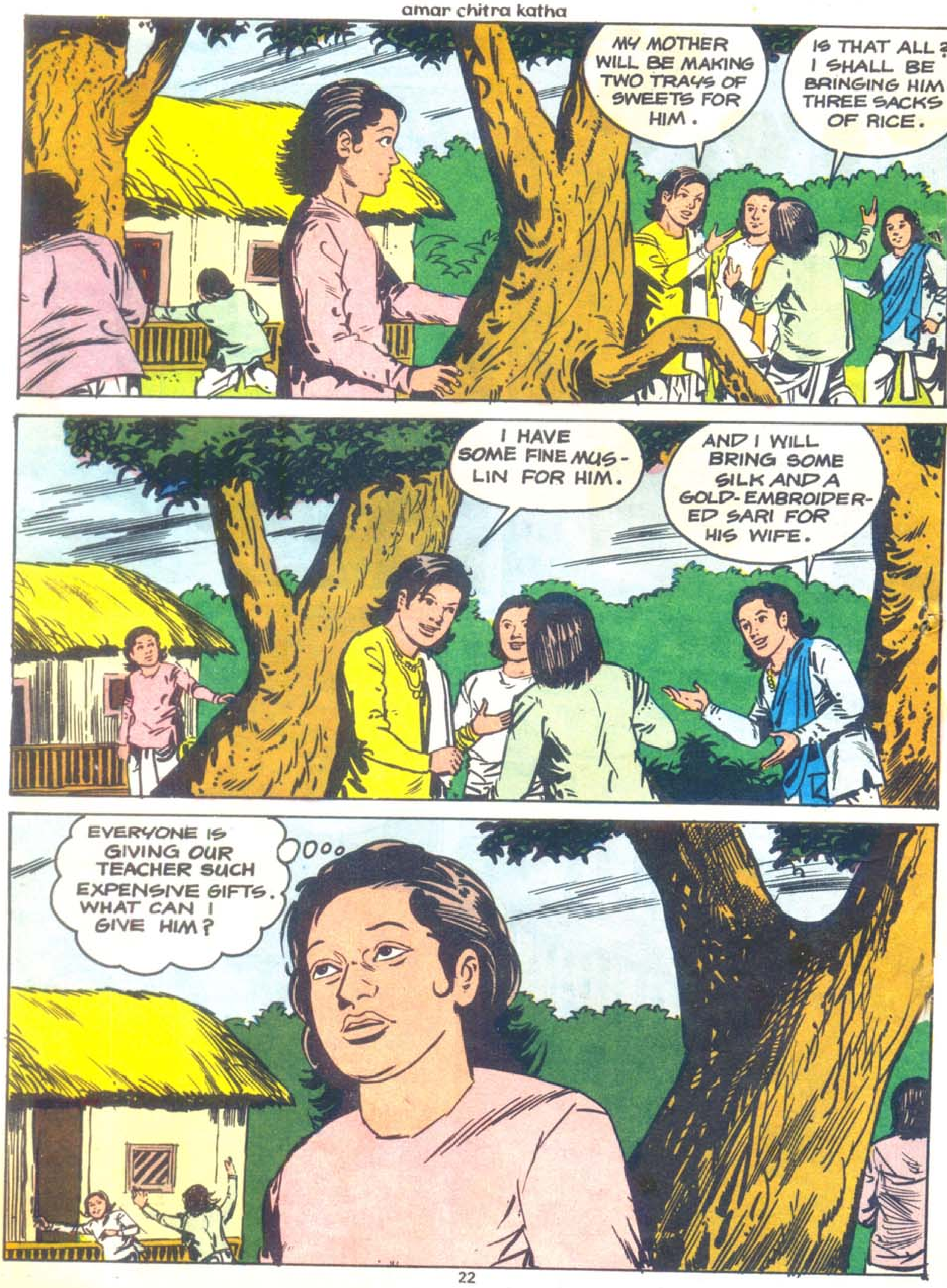

ARE YOU CALLED GOPAL TOO? AND ARE YOU REALLY MY BROTHER?
OF COURSE, I AM. MOTHER TOLD ME TO TAKE CARE OF YOU IN THE FOREST. SO HERE I AM.
YOU MUSTN'T BE LATE FOR SCHOOL. LET'S GO.
THE TWO BOYS WALKED THROUGH THE FOREST, LAUGHING AND TALKING.
HERE WE ARE.
THANK YOU, BROTHER. I AM NOT AFRAID OF THE FOREST ANY MORE.

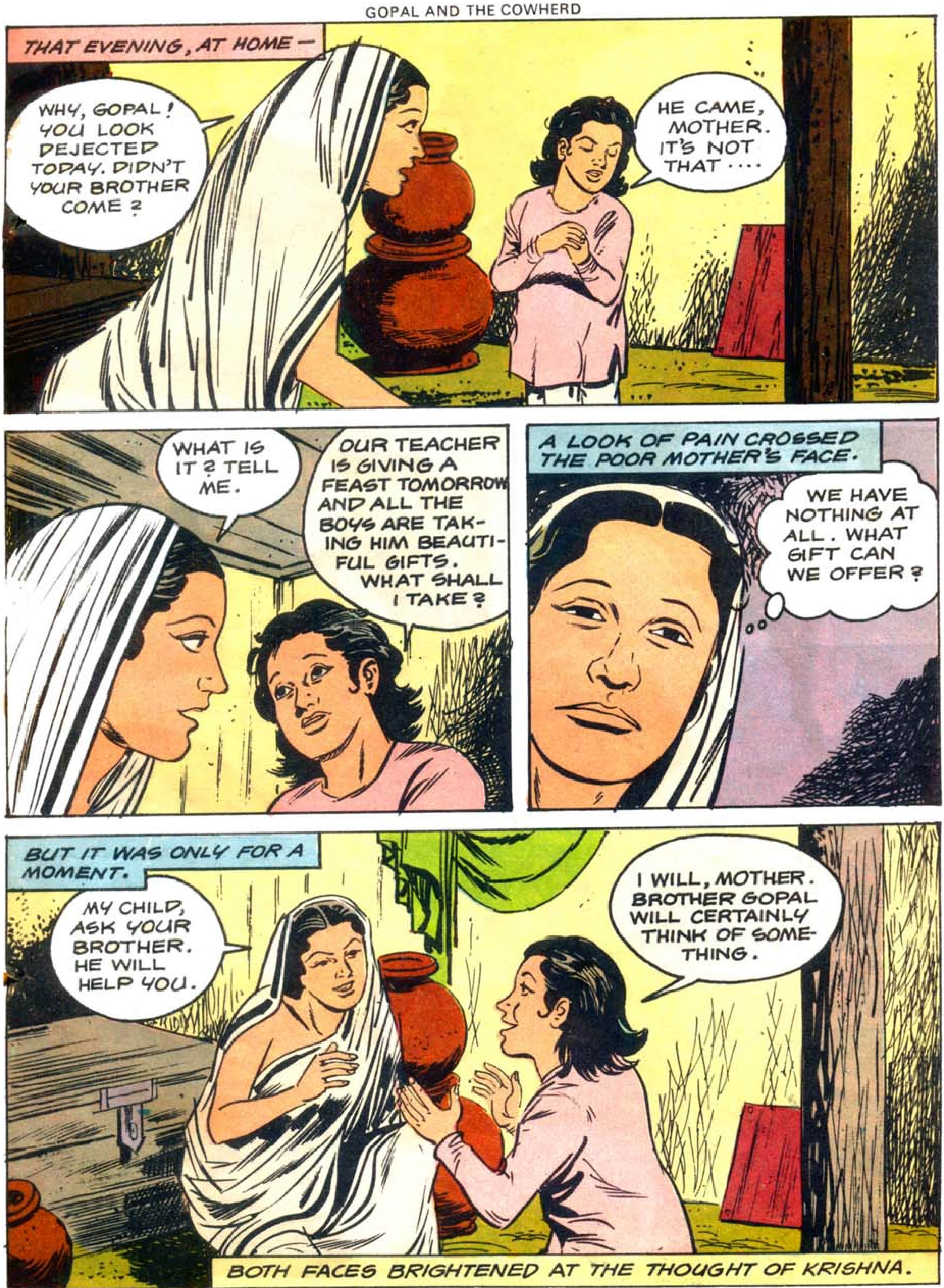

WON'T YOU COME WITH ME AND MEET MY TEACHER?
I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO, GOPAL. BUT MY COWS ARE WANDERING ABOUT UNTENDED. I MUST GO.
WILL YOU COME BACK IN THE EVENING TO TAKE ME HOME?
I WILL. JUST CALL ME AND I WILL COME.
HE IS SO FULL OF FUN AND LAUGHTER, AND YET HE IS SO KIND AND GENTLE.
IN THE EVENING, ON THE WAY HOME —
BROTHER GOPAL, PLEASE COME AND PLAY WITH ME.

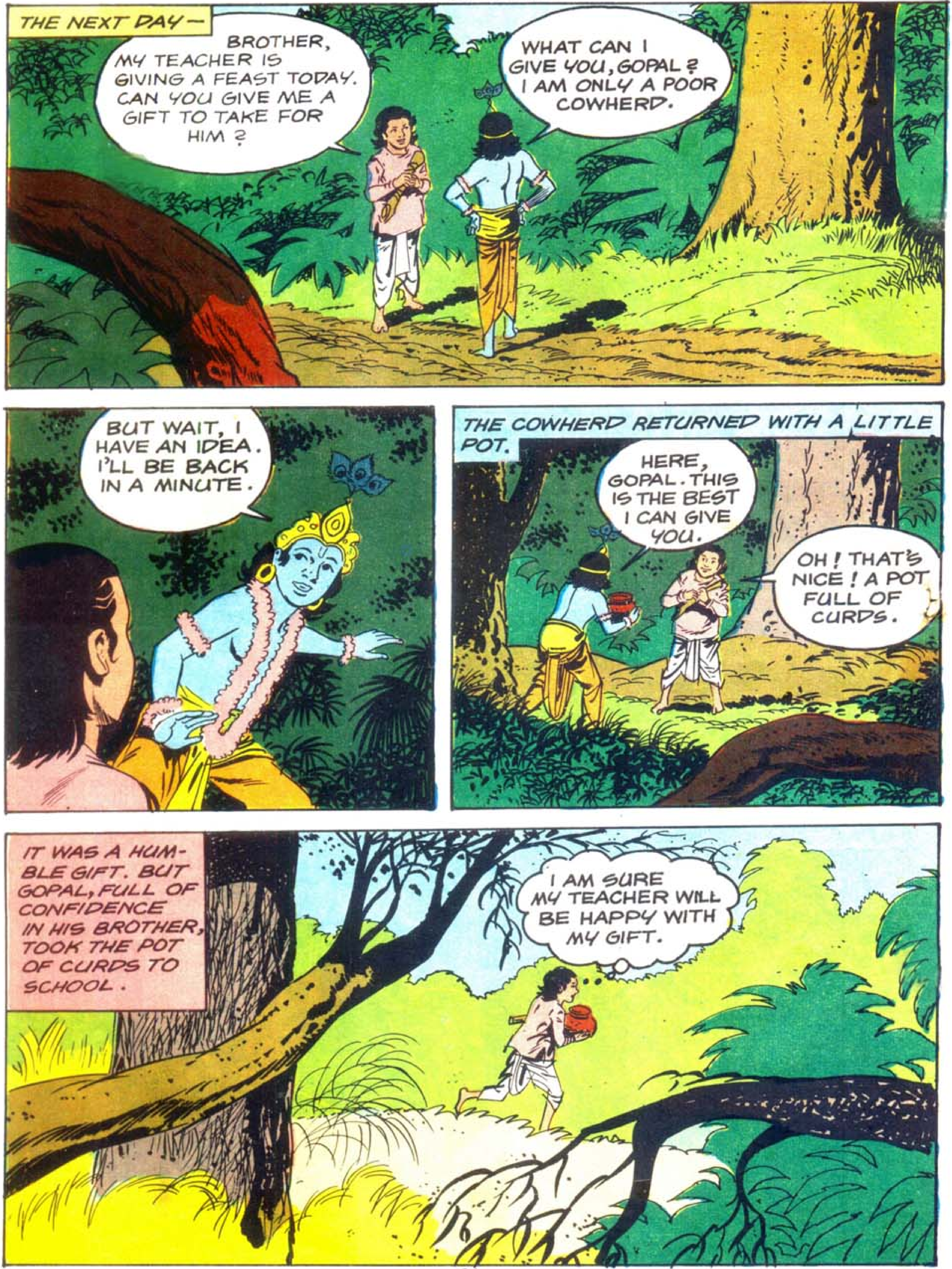

SO YOU HAVE COME, BROTHER!
I TOLD YOU I'D COME WHEN YOU CALLED.
THEY FROLICKED...
...AND PLAYED...
...AND GOPAL GREW TO LOVE HIS BROTHER AS HE HAD LOVED NO ONE ELSE BEFORE.


MOTHER, I'M HOME.
HOW RADIANT AND HAPPY HE LOOKS!
WELL, MY SON?
MOTHER, HE CAME! BROTHER GOPAL CAME! HE TOOK ME TO SCHOOL AND BROUGHT ME BACK.
I KNEW HE WOULD LOOK AFTER YOU. COME, MY CHILD, EAT NOW.
HE IS SO WONDERFUL, MOTHER. HE PLAYS THE FLUTE AND HIS PEACOCK FEATHERS DANCE EVERY TIME HE MOVES.
YOU TOOK CARE OF MY SON, MY LORD. I CALLED AND YOU CAME TO COMFORT A MOTHER'S HEART.

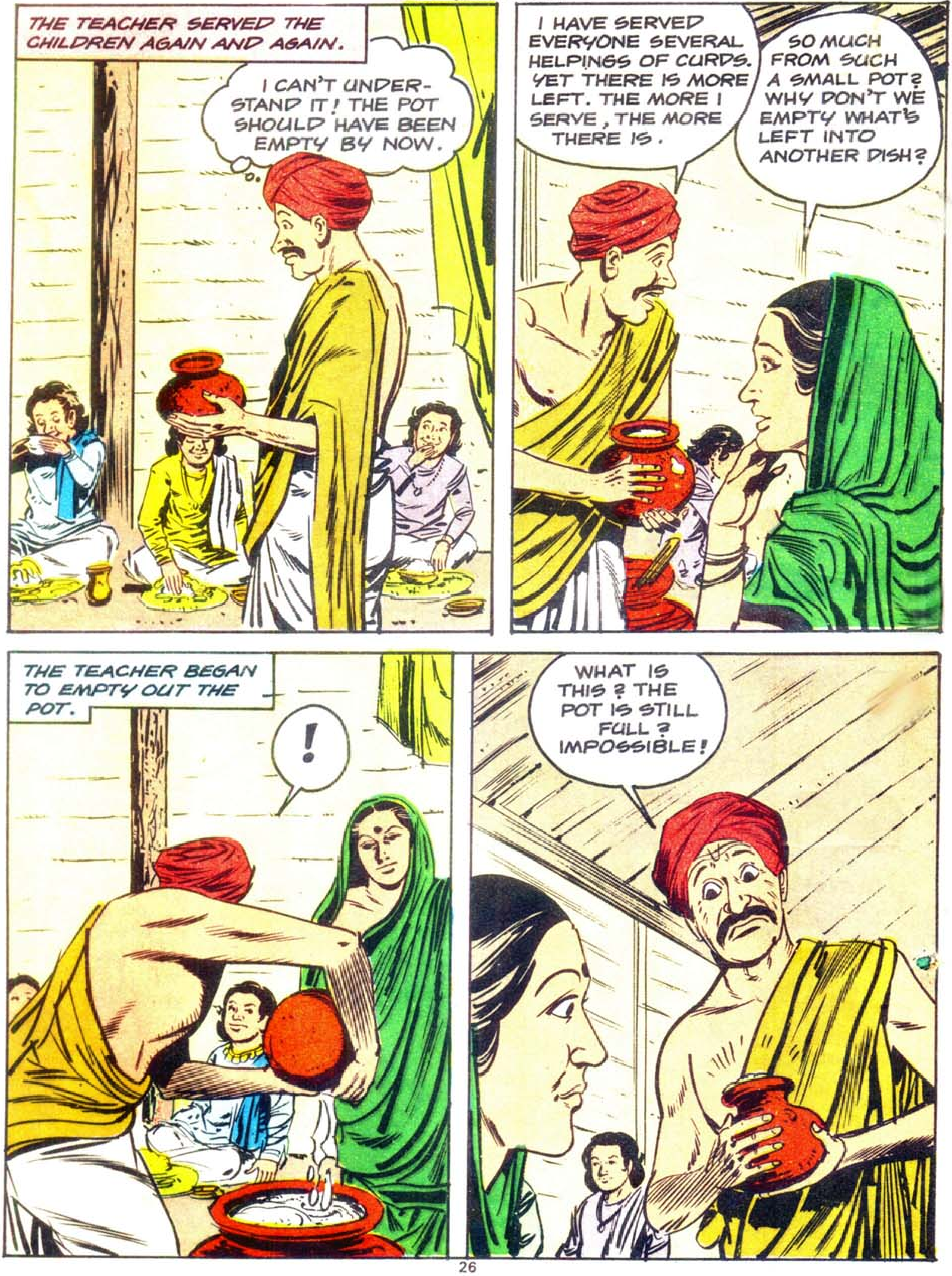

FROM THAT DAY ONWARDS, GOPAL LOST HIS FEAR OF THE FOREST.
AND HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH THE COWHERD BROUGHT A GLOW OF HAPPINESS INTO HIS LIFE.
ONE DAY, IN SCHOOL—
HAVE YOU HEARD ? OUR TEACHER IS GOING TO GIVE A FEAST TOMORROW.
YES, AND WE MUST ALL BRING HIM GIFTS.
WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING FOR HIM, GOPAL ?
I . . . I DON'T KNOW. I'LL HAVE TO ASK MY MOTHER.


MY MOTHER WILL BE MAKING TWO TRAYS OF SWEETS FOR HIM.
IS THAT ALL? I SHALL BE BRINGING HIM THREE SACKS OF RICE.
I HAVE SOME FINE MUS-LIN FOR HIM.
AND I WILL BRING SOME SILK AND A GOLD-EMBROIDER-ED SARI FOR HIS WIFE.
EVERYONE IS GIVING OUR TEACHER SUCH EXPENSIVE GIFTS. WHAT CAN I GIVE HIM?


THAT EVENING, AT HOME —
WHY, GOPAL! YOU LOOK DEJECTED TODAY. DIDN'T YOUR BROTHER COME ?
HE CAME, MOTHER. IT'S NOT THAT ....
WHAT IS IT ? TELL ME.
OUR TEACHER IS GIVING A FEAST TOMORROW AND ALL THE BOYS ARE TAKING HIM BEAUTIFUL GIFTS. WHAT SHALL I TAKE ?
A LOOK OF PAIN CROSSED THE POOR MOTHER'S FACE.
WE HAVE NOTHING AT ALL. WHAT GIFT CAN WE OFFER ?
BUT IT WAS ONLY FOR A MOMENT.
MY CHILD, ASK YOUR BROTHER. HE WILL HELP YOU.
I WILL, MOTHER. BROTHER GOPAL WILL CERTAINLY THINK OF SOMETHING.
BOTH FACES BRIGHTENED AT THE THOUGHT OF KRISHNA.


THE NEXT DAY —
BROTHER, MY TEACHER IS GIVING A FEAST TODAY. CAN YOU GIVE ME A GIFT TO TAKE FOR HIM ?
WHAT CAN I GIVE YOU, GOPAL ? I AM ONLY A POOR COWHERD.
BUT WAIT, I HAVE AN IDEA. I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.
THE COWHERD RETURNED WITH A LITTLE POT.
HERE, GOPAL. THIS IS THE BEST I CAN GIVE YOU.
OH ! THAT'S NICE ! A POT FULL OF CURDS.
IT WAS A HUMBLE GIFT. BUT GOPAL, FULL OF CONFIDENCE IN HIS BROTHER, TOOK THE POT OF CURDS TO SCHOOL.
I AM SURE MY TEACHER WILL BE HAPPY WITH MY GIFT.


AT SCHOOL, THE CHILDREN BEGAN TO OFFER THEIR GIFTS TO THE TEACHER AND HIS WIFE.
WHEN GOPAL'S TURN CAME, THE TEACHER TOOK THE POT A LITTLE COLDLY. TEARS WELLED UP IN GOPAL'S EYES.
SEEING HIS TEARS, THE TEACHER REGRETTED HIS COLDNESS.
THESE CURDS LOOK VERY TASTY. THANK YOU, MY CHILD.
THE CURDS WERE SERVED DURING THE FEAST.
THE CURDS ARE DELICIOUS! PLEASE GIVE ME SOME MORE.
FOR ME, TOO!
AND ME!


THE TEACHER SERVED THE CHILDREN AGAIN AND AGAIN.
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! THE POT SHOULD HAVE BEEN EMPTY BY NOW.
I HAVE SERVED EVERYONE SEVERAL HELPINGS OF CURDS. YET THERE IS MORE LEFT. THE MORE I SERVE, THE MORE THERE IS.
SO MUCH FROM SUCH A SMALL POT? WHY DON'T WE EMPTY WHAT'S LEFT INTO ANOTHER DISH?
THE TEACHER BEGAN TO EMPTY OUT THE POT.
!
WHAT IS THIS? THE POT IS STILL FULL? IMPOSSIBLE!


THE TEACHER POURED AND POURED, BUT STILL THE POT OF CURDS REMAINED FULL.
?
!
?
DUMBFOUNDED, THE TEACHER TURNED TO GOPAL.
GOPAL, WHERE DID YOU GET THIS POT?
FROM MY BROTHER IN THE FOREST, SIR.
HE MUST BE A MAGICIAN.
OH, NO, HE IS ONLY A COWHERD. HE WEARS A GOLDEN CROWN WITH PEACOCK FEATHERS IN IT.


ARE YOU JOKING, MY BOY?
NO, SIR, I MEET HIM IN THE FOREST ON MY WAY TO SCHOOL.
GOPAL, ONLY ONE WEARS A CROWN WITH PEACOCK FEATHERS. BUT YOU AND I CAN NEVER SEE HIM.
BUT I SEE HIM EVERY DAY. HE IS MY BROTHER.
DON'T SPIN SUCH TALES, GOPAL. ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH.
BUT, SIR, IT IS THE TRUTH. MY MOTHER TOLD ME HE WOULD COME AND TAKE CARE OF ME. AND HE DOES. MY MOTHER NEVER LIES.


CAN YOU TAKE ME TO THIS BROTHER OF YOURS THEN?
OF COURSE, SIR. COME WITH ME INTO THE FOREST.


GOPAL TOOK HIS TEACHER INTO THE FOREST, AND WHEN THEY REACHED THE THICKEST PART —
BROTHER GOPAL, THIS IS YOUR LITTLE BROTHER CALLING. COME TO ME.


THERE WAS NO ANSWER. GOPAL CALLED AGAIN.
BROTHER GOPAL, BROTHER GOPAL. PLEASE, WON'T YOU COME?


STILL THERE WAS ONLY SILENCE.
DID YOU REALLY EXPECT HIM TO COME, GOPAL?
GOPAL BEGAN TO CRY.
OH, BROTHER GOPAL, WHY DON'T YOU COME WHEN I NEED YOU? I SHALL BE CALLED A LIAR NOW.
SUDDENLY, FROM DEEP WITHIN THE FOREST, CAME THE LIQUID NOTES OF A FLUTE.
THEY HEARD A LOW AND LOVING VOICE.
I AM HERE, GENTLE GOPAL. I AM VISIBLE ONLY TO THE PURE AND THE FAITHFUL; TO THOSE WHO LOVE ME WELL.


THE SOUND OF THE FLUTE ROSE MELODIOUSLY AND THEN THERE WAS SILENCE. THE TEACHER FELL TO HIS KNEES.
MY LORD, MY LORD, I HAVE HEARD YOU. HROUGH A YOUNG CHILD, YOU HAVE TAUGHT ME NOT TO SCORN THE HUMBLE.
GOPAL KNEW NOW WHO HIS BROTHER REALLY WAS.
BECAUSE OF YOU, MY CHILD, WE HAVE PARTAKEN OF CURDS FROM THE VERY HANDS OF THE LORD.
THE FOREST LIT UP WITH THE RADIANCE OF KRISHNA.
DAZED AND SHAKEN BY THE EXPERIENCE, THE TEACHER WALKED SLOWLY BACK TO THE SCHOOL WITH GOPAL.

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